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An Initiative of Association for Voluntary Action (AVA)

Grievance Redressal Policy

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL POLICY

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1. Introduction and Objective

This Grievance Redressal Policy (“**this Policy**”) aims to reinforce Association for Voluntary Action (“**AVA**” or “**the Organization**”) commitment towards providing fair and equitable work environment to all Associates.

Organization has fairly large number of associates. In any organization the employees deal and interact with other employees on a day to day basis. These interactions could be with their peers, their subordinates as also their seniors. Sometimes these interactions may lead to a conflict among the employees. Interactions may also result in an employee feeling dissatisfied with the way he has been treated/dealt with by a peer, a senior or a junior. An employee may also become dissatisfied and develop a grievance on account of some management decision taken by another employee within the organizational hierarchy qua him. These decisions may relate to sanction of leave, grant of annual increment, grant of promotion, expression of dissatisfaction with performance, admonition of an employee, denial of permission to go on tour, etc. Needless to add the examples given are only illustrative and not exhaustive.

The objective of this policy is to lay down the procedure/mechanism for redressal of grievances of AVA Associates of the nature described above and to create an internal Standing Committee named as Grievance Redressal Committee to inquire into complaints about all such grievances and make recommendations for the necessary corrective action, if any.

In view of above, below are the objectives of this Policy:

- To provide efficient and effective grievance redressal mechanism for all Associates of the Organization and lay down the procedure thereof;
- To create and promote a culture of fairness, trust and justice within the Organization;
- Establish the protocol to enable the Organization resolve Associate grievances effectively, promptly, quickly and in a time bound manner;
- To promote collaboration among Associates by addressing and resolving associate discontent

2. Scope

This Policy is applicable to all associates/staff on rolls of the Organization, volunteers, consultants, trainees, members of the Board of Trustees and members of any of the committees of the Organization (“**Associates**”).

3. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide mechanism for Associates to raise grievances arising from their employment, working conditions, entitlements, service conditions. The Policy will also ensure that such grievances are dealt with promptly, fairly and in accordance with Policies of the Organization. This Policy should be read in conjunction with other Policies such as the Whistleblower Policy etc.

4. Definitions

“Complainant” shall mean any Associate (including legal heirs, assigns or legal representatives) who reports a grievance to the Organization;

“Respondent” shall mean any Associate against whom a complaint has been reported under this Policy. Respondent shall have the right to receive a copy of the allegations levelled against him.

5. Associate Grievance

Grievance is any discontent or dissatisfaction, whether expressed or not, arising out of anything connected with the Organization which an Associate thinks, believes and even feels to be unfair, unjust or inequitable. It could be against an individual, a group or an Organization.

Grievance Reasons (Illustrative)

- Compensation (Gender pay difference, pay disparity);
- Difference in opinion with supervisors/colleagues/subordinates;
- Feeling of bias, neglect and humiliation;
- Workplace harassment;
- Supervisor’s behaviour;
- Adverse changes in employment conditions;
- Promotional opportunities;
- Termination, except where as a result of a disciplinary action;
- Delay in or denial of reimbursement of bills or allowances which were timely submitted;
- Unjustifiable denial of Leave/compensatory leave;
- Delay or denial in provision of phone, laptop, computer etc subject to the Organization entitlements;
- Grievance against unavailability or non-repair of office facilities eg proper work space, wash room condition, canteen, availability of transport etc;

- Denial of request for change of role or post considered mismatched by the Associate;
- Access to members of Management Committee;
- Any other grievance

This list is not exhaustive. However, Associates should try to resolve trivial issues informally before they resort to a formal grievance. Grievance pertaining to; or arising out of the following shall not come under the purview of this Policy:

- Annual performance appraisals/Confidential Reports; adverse remarks be communicated
- Where the grievance does not relate to an individual associate; admin, work condition grievances
- Grievances pertaining to sexual harassment at workplace to be covered under the Organization's PoSH Policy
- Grievance arising out of termination/dismissal, demotion, suspension, other disciplinary actions or appeal against such actions

6. Consequences of Employee Grievance

- Unattended grievances of an Associate can have an adverse impact on:
 - Associate's behavior, performance and relationships at work.
 - General work climate and performance in that Division or even across the organization.
 - On the overall performance, effectiveness of the organization.

At the Organization level, it may lead to:

- Low employee morale
- Absenteeism
- Poor interpersonal relations
- Reduced productivity and poor quality of work.
- Poor Inter-personal communication leading to reduced output.
- Poor work environment and sporadic acts of indiscipline.

7. Positive dimensions of Employee Grievance

Grievance may also have positive dimensions hence, should be addressed as a matter of priority and in appropriate manner:

- A grievance once it is ventilated and addressed prevents future acts of indiscipline and deterioration of the work environment.
- It may also bring out inappropriate conduct on the part of an Associate and irregularity or a malpractice.
- The fact that Associates do not hesitate to express their grievance is indicative of a free, healthy and positive work environment. It is also indicative of free and unhindered vertical communication within organization.
- Grievances may also bring out areas of work in which improvements are called for.

8. Guiding Principles

Whenever the grievance procedure is being followed, the following elements shall be considered while dealing with the issues fairly:

- Associates should always try to resolve problems in the work place amicably, at the earliest possible opportunity and usually with the least possible formality with helping hand of supervisors and seniors;
- All efforts shall be made to address matters before they reach the stage of becoming a formal grievance issue

9. Grievance Redressal Committee

- 9.1 A Grievance Redressal Committee (“**GRC**” or the “**Committee**”) shall be constituted at the Organization to deal with grievances of the Associates under this Policy. It shall be a standing committee and shall continue to remain in existence until dissolved by the Organization through a specific order;
- 9.2 The Committee shall consist of atleast three persons, one of whom shall be the convener. While appointing members to the committee, gender representation and a cross section of different levels of competent staff shall be considered. The Committee may, if deemed necessary coopt the relevant Department head or any other Associate as part of the Committee, where such cooption is imperative to redress the grievance; and
- 9.3 The Committee shall not become inoperative by reason of a vacancy being caused by way of resignation, transfer, etc. In the event of a vacancy being caused, the Committee shall be competent to co-opt any Associate of the Organization as a member with prior approval of the CEO of the Organization.

10. Roles and Responsibilities of GRC

The GRC shall be responsible to ensure that grievances are dealt with effectively in accordance with the procedures set out under this Policy. The GRC and senior members of

the Organization shall ensure that sufficient advice and guidance is provided to the Complainant and the Respondent. In doing so, GRC shall adhere to the following principles:

- Take grievances seriously considering why the Associate feels aggrieved, unhappy or dissatisfied;
- The Committee shall strictly adhere to the principles of natural justice while conducting an enquiry into a complaint and shall grant sufficient right and opportunity to the Respondent to present himself/herself and submit a reply;
- Ensure that effective counselling is provided to the Associate and actively look for a solution that will address the Associate's grievances;
- Give feedback to the Associate about the action which has been taken to redress his/her grievance.

11. Reporting & Redressal Procedure

11.1 Reporting of Grievance

11.1.1 Grievances can be reported formally in writing or informally (verbally) by the Associate.

11.1.2 Grievance may be filed in writing to any member of the Grievance Redressal Committee, or either of its members orally, or in person. Complaint can also be made telephonically or through an email. The complaints made through WhatsApp can be made on the mobile numbers of the members or the Members of the Committee. The mobile numbers of GRC members shall be displayed at a conspicuous place in the Organization. All the complaints made orally, in person or on phone shall be recorded in writing by the member of the Grievance Redressal Committee who receives it. In case the complaint has been received by one of the Members, it shall be placed before the Committee for their information.

11.1.3 Complaint may be made by the aggrieved Associate or by any other Associate on his/her behalf if for some reason the aggrieved Associate is hesitant to communicate with the Committee directly or is unable to reach any of the Members for some reason.

11.1.4 There would also be occasions when a grievance is expressed collectively by a group of Associates rather than by a single person. This could be against an individual or about service or work place related. In such cases it would be best for the GRC to call the entire group and hear the representatives. Submission of a written representation in these cases signed by all aggrieved members would be in order. Group should select the persons that would present their case.

11.2 Grievance Redressal Procedure

11.2.1 There will be a three-tier grievance procedure with further provision of appeal, as detailed below:

11.2.2 The Committee shall strictly adhere to the principles of natural justice while conducting an enquiry into a complaint. Given below is the process that shall be

adopted while conducting an enquiry into a complaint. Though the procedure delineated below shall be adopted for all grievances, but if the Committee is of the view that in a given case there is a need to deviate from the laid-down process to ascertain the truth, it shall be at liberty to do so.

11.3 Stage – I: Informal

- 11.3.1** Any grievance of an Associate should be first discussed verbally by him/her with the immediate supervisor;
- 11.3.2** If grievance is with the supervisor itself and Associate is not comfortable to connect with supervisor, in such cases Associate should connect directly with Human Resource Manager;
- 11.3.3** Human Resource Manager will first set up informal meeting with both the involved parties to discuss, understand and resolve the grievance through conciliation within 5 working days of the reporting thereof.

11.4 Stage – II: Formal

- 11.4.1** In case the Associate is not satisfied with the decision communicated to them at Stage-I or fails to receive the reply within stipulated period, Associate may submit his/her grievance, by filling a Grievance Form (**Annexure G-1**) to the GRC for the latter's consideration. At this stage, the grievance will be looked into by a GRC;
- 11.4.2** A written acknowledgement shall be sent to the Complainant within 3 working days of the receipt of the complaint/grievance by GRC;
- 11.4.3** The Complainant who has filed a Stage-II grievance may be allowed to present his/her case in person, and may be allowed to be assisted by a co-worker of his or her choice before the Committee;
- 11.4.4** When either Complainant or the Respondent desires to submit any document by way of evidence before the Committee, they shall be permitted to produce such documentary evidence, production of photocopies of documents duly authenticated shall suffice. If the photocopies submitted are unauthenticated then the veracity of all such documents shall be verified by the Committee on its own. In case the complainant is not in a position to produce a document in support of the allegations due to the fact that such documents are in possession of another Associate, in such an eventuality the Committee, in the interest of justice, and if it considers the documents relevant, may summon those documents from the Associate in whose possession they are.
- 11.4.5** If the complainant wishes to examine some witnesses in support of the allegations levelled by him/her, Committee may permit the same and examine all the witnesses cited by him/her, who are considered relevant to the facts of the case by it. The Committee shall have the power to refuse examination of a witness cited by the complainant who is considered to be irrelevant to the subject Enquiry.

- 11.4.6** Committee may, subject to justifiable reasons and circumstances shall on request of the Aggrieved, permit Complainant's request for examination of witnesses. It shall also afford an opportunity to the Respondent to produce witnesses, in its defence;
- 11.4.7** The Committee shall, before taking up a complaint for enquiry communicate about the same to the Complainant and Respondent;
- 11.4.8** The Committee shall provide every reasonable opportunity to the Complainant and Respondent, for putting forward and defending their respective cases;
- 11.4.9** The Committee will meet at regular fixed intervals to deliberate upon all such grievances as are addressed to it. In the event of difference of opinion amongst the members of the GRC, decision of majority will be prevailing;
GRC shall give report and submit its findings to the CEO or Director HR as the case may be. GRC shall provide a copy of its report to the Complainant and Respondent.
- 11.4.10** The GRC recommendations should be implemented within 30 days of the communication thereof;
- 11.4.11** If it is found that a member of the Committee has prima-facie violated the provisions of this Policy, s/he shall forthwith be removed from their post.

11.5 Stage – III: Representation

A representation shall lie on the basis of the basis of the recommendations made by the GRC.

If the Associate is not satisfied with the findings about his/her grievance at Stage – II and wishes to file a written representation s/he should let the GRC know. The Associate shall be invited to a representation I meeting within 5 working days of communication thereof and the representation will be heard by CEO/Managing Trustee and HR Head of the Organization.

While deciding the Representation, the competent authority shall provide a personal hearing to the Complainant Associate and "Associate complained against" along with their submissions. The order disposing off the representation shall be the speaking order.

The designated authority at this stage will be responsible for hearing, deciding on appeals, mediation and finding resolution.

No second representation shall lie against the administrative action taken on the basis of recommendation of GRC

12. Decisions

The Committee shall invariably attempt to reach a consensus. The decision taken after Stage III shall be final and binding on all parties.

13. Open-Door Culture

The Open-Door philosophy is a fundamental part of Organization's culture and is designed to foster a work environment that welcomes early identification of challenges, problems and

resolution thereof. The door is open to anyone who chooses to telephone or talk face to face with any level of supervision or Management in our Organization. Open Door provides an opportunity for Associates to express suggestions, observations or concerns regarding the Organization to the attention of any Manager, Human Resource or member of Management Committee. Such communications are important to meeting the needs of Associates and should be welcomed by all supervisors or members of the Management Committee.

Associates are encouraged to exercise the Open Door opportunity during their normal work hours. All issues discussed will be treated confidentially and impartially. Every Associate is assured that each issue, concern or suggestion will be given priority consideration and addressed in a manner best suited to resolve the matter satisfactorily.

14. Non-Retaliation

Information on Associates reporting violations or potential violations of this Policy shall remain confidential. The Organization's culture does not encourage any semblance of retaliatory behaviour against the Complainant.

15. Record Retention & Access

- i. The Committee should ensure that the following minimal set of records are maintained. Human Resources department shall ensure the filing and safekeeping of the records.
 - Written grievance statement;
 - The nature of the grievance;
 - Evidences;
 - Reports & recommendations of the GRC (including the interim-report as well as the final one);
 - Corrective action taken on the GRC Reports;
- ii. All documentation pertaining to a Complaint will be maintained for a period not less than two (2) years from the date of disposal of the Complaint.

16. Confidentiality

All reports and records associated with Complaints under this Policy are considered confidential information and access will be restricted by the Organization as deemed fit.

All members of the Grievance Committee, as well as any staff member questioned in relation to an issue at hand, are bound by the duty of confidentiality and sensitivity at all times and hold in confidence, all documentation and information exchanged in the process.

All concerned records shall normally not be disclosed except in cases as required under any legal obligations or judicial orders.

17. Exceptions & Review of Policy

- i. Any deviations from this Policy require approval from the Management Committee;
- ii. Organization reserves the right to modify and/or review the provisions of this Policy from time to time, in order to comply with applicable legal requirements or internal policies, to the extent necessary.

18. Contact

Any questions/clarifications regarding this Policy shall be referred to Human Resource Department

Annexure G - 1

ASSOCIATE GRIEVANCE REPORTING FORM

Associate _____ Department _____ Reporting Date _____

Date of incident giving rise to grievance _____

Description of issue or event giving rise to grievance

Description of action sought

For use by Grievance Redressal Committee Members

Step 1: Date of verbal discussion _____

Comments:

Committee Members Initial _____

Step 2: Date of written grievance received _____

Comments:

Committee Members Initial _____

Step 3: Date grievance received _____

Comments:

Committee Members Initial _____

Step 4: Date grievance closed and communicated _____

Comments:

Committee Members Initial _____



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